

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
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O 171030Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4654
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 14096

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND COMIPAC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, LA, VM
SUBJ: REPORTS OF RUSSIANS KILLED IN LAOS AND VIET-NAM

1. ACCORDING TO THE MAY 17 BANGKOK WORLD, THE RTG INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC) HAS RECEIVED A REPORT WHICH INDICATES THAT 14 SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS AND A NORTH VIET-NAMESE DRIVER WERE KILLED MAY 16 IN A LAND MINE BLAST AND AMBUSH NINETEEN KILOMETERS OUTSIDE OF VIENTIANE. (NOTE: NEITHER ISOC NOR TASS CAN CONFIRM OR DENY THIS STORY.) THEY WERE REPORTEDLY ENROUTE TO VISIT A MILITARY BARRACKS AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACK ON THE HIGHWAY BETWEEN VIENTIANE AND PAKSANE, PARALLEL TO THE MEKONG RIVER, JUST OPPOSITE THAILAND'S THAI BUNG KAN DISTRICT. ATTACKERS ASSUMED TO HAVE BEEN LAO RIGHTISTS. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THE SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS WERE TRAVELLING IN A THREE JEEP CONVOY,
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DEPARTING VIENTIANE AT 4:00 P.M., AN HOUR BEFORE THE EXPLOSION. FOLLOWING THE BLAST, WHICH WAS REPORTEDLY HEARD IN THAILAND, REBELS ATTACKED WITH HEAVY MACHINE GUN FIRE, KILLING THE RUSSIANS AND NORTH VIETNAMESE. THE FATE OF THE OTHER TWO JEEPS IS NOT KNOWN.

2. THE FRENCH EMBASSY INFORMED US MAY 16 THAT THEY HAD JUST

RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THEIR EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE, SIGNED BY AMBASSADOR DUZER, WHICH WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN LAOS. REPORT INDICATED A GENERAL DECLINE IN LPDR SECURITY BUT REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO SECURITY IN THE VICINITY OF VIENTIANE.

3. SEPARATELY, FROM A RELIABLE AMERICAN JOURNALIST WHO JUST ARRIVED FROM TOKYO, WE HAVE RECEIVED A REPORT, ORIGINALLY FROM JAPANESE JAPANESE JOURNALISTS EMBASSY IN THE SRV, THAT "SEVERAL" RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED RECENTLY IN SEVERAL INCIDENTS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. IN THE ONLY SPECIFIC INCIDENT, THE JAPANESE HEARD THAT INSURGENTS HAD TOSSED A HAND GRENADE INTO A RUSSIAN ADVISOR COMPOUND IN CAN THO. TWO OR THREE RUSSIANS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED IN THE ATTACK.

4. COMMENT: THE BANGKOK WORLD REPORTER WHO FILED THE STORY FROM NONG KHAI OF THE KILLING OF FOURTEEN RUSSIANS HAS FREQUENTLY FILED ERRONEOUS REPORTS. FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HERE ARE GENERALLY SKEPTICAL OF HIS REPORTING. WE NOTE THAT AN ATTACK NINETEEN KILOMETERS FROM VIENTIANE ALONG THE VIENTIANE-PAKSANE HIGHWAY WOULD BE ROUGHLY FOUR OR FIVE KILOMETERS FROM THE MEKONG. THIS DISTANCE CASTS DOUBT ON SOME DETAILS IN THE STORY, INCLUDING WHETHER IT WOULD BE VIEWED AND HEARD SO CLEARLY IN THAILAND AS THE WORLD STORY IMPLIES.

5. NEVERTHELESS, SUCH AN INCIDENT AND THE REPORT FROM
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VIET-NAM SEEMED LIKELY AT SOME POINT. ANIMOSITY TOWARD THE RUSSIANS IN BOTH COUNTRIES HAS BEEN REPORTED FREQUENTLY. A REFUGEE FROM HO CHI MINH CITY RECENTLY DESCRIBED WIDESPREAD HOSTILITY TOWARD RUSSIANS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. HE TOLD US THAT PHYSICAL AND VERBAL ATTACKS WERE COMMON IN HO CHI MINH CITY AND EVEN MORE SO IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. AFTER SUCH ATTACKS ARE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF AUTHORITIES, POLICE HUNT IN THE OFFENDERS FOR QUESTIONING. THE STANDARD AND FREQUENTLY EFFECTIVE RESPONSE IS TO CLAIM THAT YOU "THOUGHT THE FOREIGNER WAS AN AMERICAN."
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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